

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 HA-05 SSM-03
MCT-01 ARA-10 /105 W
-----042143 081333Z /50

O R 081250Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7898
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2585

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI ASEC LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION: MAY 8, 1300 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 2559 (DTG 061050Z MAY 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE CEASE-FIRE IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH IS HOLDING.
THE ADF SAID IT HAD INTERVENED TO STOP SHOOTING BETWEEN ELEMENTS
IN SHIYAH AND AYN AR-RUMMANAH. PIERRE GEMAYEL DEMANDED AN IMMED-
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IATE INVESTIGATION, WHILE BACHIR GEMAYEL WARNED THAT AYN AR-
RUMMANAH WOULD NOT "BECOME ANOTHER DAMOUR." NO SUBSTANTIAL
PROGRESS WAS MADE ON DEFINING UNIFIL'S RELATIONS WITH PALESTINIANS
DURING YASIR ARAFAT'S MEETING WITH UNIFIL COMMANDER ERSKINE IN
SABRA CAMP. PALESTINIANS EXCHANGED ARTILLERY FIRE WITH CHRIS-
TIAN IN SOUTH LEBANON. ACTING PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS HAS STILL
NOT FORMED A CABINET. END SUMMARY.

2. CEASE-FIRE HOLDING.

A. THE CEASE-FIRE IN AYN AR-RUMMANAH HAS BEEN HOLDING SINCE THE MORNING OF MAY 6. (DATT SAW SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF ARMED MILITIA IN AYN AR-RUMMANAH AS WELL AS ARRIVAL OF SYRIAN DEFENSE BATTALION IN SHIYAH FROM OTHER PARTS OF CITY THAT AFTERNOON.) THERE WAS BRIEF OUTBREAK OF SMALL ARMS FIRE AT 2100 HOURS THAT EVENING. DURING TOUR OF AREA MORNING MAY 8 EMBOFF OBSERVED THAT MAIN ROAD BETWEEN AYN AR-RUMMANAH AND SHIYAH WAS OPEN, ALTHOUGH TRAFFIC WAS LESS THAN NORMAL. SUDANESE AND SAUDI ADF TROOPS WERE IN POSITION ALONG ROAD, BUT NO SYRIANS. LATTER, HOWEVER, WERE STILL AT TAYYUNAH CIRCLE AND GALERIE SEMAAN. BARRICADES REMAINED UP IN BOTH AYN AR-RUMMANAH AND SHIYAH, ALTHOUGH ARMED MILITIA WERE NOT IN VIEW FROM MAIN ROAD. ARMED MILITIA WERE ON STREETS OF FURN ASH-SHUBBAK.

B. ON MAY 6 TWO MIXED COMMITTEES OF COORDINATION WERE FORMED TO PREVENT FUTURE INCIDENTS. THE FIRST, COMPOSED OF FIVE ADF OFFICERS AND FIVE LEBANESE ARMY OFFICERS, IS CHARGED WITH KEEPING WATCH OVER THE SITUATION IN SHIYAH. A SECOND COMMITTEE, COMPOSED OF FIVE OFFICERS OF THE ADF AND FIVE REPRESENTATIVES OF CHRISTIAN "LEBANESE FORCES", IS CHARGED WITH WATCHING OVER AYN AR-RUMMANAH.

3. ORIGINS OF FIGHTING.

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A MAY 6 ADF COMMUNIQUE SAID: "ANARCHISTS INFILTRATED INTO AREAS CLOSE TO THE OLD SIDON ROAD FROM THE DIRECTIONS OF SHIYAH AND AYN AR-RUMMANAH AND EXCHANGED GUNFIRE AND ROCKET PROPELLED GRENADES. THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCES STATIONED IN THE AREA INTERVENED AND SHELLED BOTH PARTIES, SILENCING THEM. ONE WOMAN. . . AND SEVERAL PEOPLE WERE WOUNDED. . . ." (ADF HAS THUS DECIDED TO BLAME NO PARTY IN LIGHT OF CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS ON HOW FIGHTING STARTED. SEE MAY 6 SITREP.)

4. DIVERGENT ATTITUDES WITHIN PHALANGE.

A. PHALANGE PARTY CHIEF PIERRE GEMAYEL TOLD REPORTERS THAT MERCENARIES "FROM SOME COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD" WERE TRYING TO SABOTAGE LEBANON. HE SAID HE WAS SURE NO ONE IN AYN AR-RUMMANAH STARTED THE FIGHTING BUT DEMANDED AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INCIDENT, TO BE FOLLOWED BY PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION OF THE PARTIES RESPONSIBLE.

B. THE SAME DAY, HOWEVER, BACHIR GEMAYEL TOLD REPORTS "THAT THIS NEIGHBORHOOD CANNOT REMAIN A PUNCHING BAG FOR ANYBODY." HE ADDED THAT, "EVERYONE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT AYN AR-RUMMANAH WILL NOT BECOME ANOTHER DAMOUR. IT WITHSTOOD THREE YEARS

AND IS READY TO WITHSTAND 30 MORE."

5. SOUTH LEBANON.

A. NO SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS WAS MADE DURING YASIR ARAFAT'S MAY 5 MEETING WITH UNIFIL COMMANDER ERSKINE IN SABRA CAMP NEAR BEIRUT, ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS. ALTHOUGH ARAFAT REPORTEDLY AGAIN SAID THE PLO WOULD COOPERATE WITH UNIFIL, HE DID NOT PROMISE THAT PALESTINIANS WOULD STOP TRYING TO INFILTRATE THROUGH UNIFIL LINES.

B. MEANWHILE, ALL BEIRUT PAPERS MAY 8 CARRIED STORIES CITING FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER DE GUIRINGAUD AS SAYING THE FRENCH CONTINGENT WOULD BE "PLACED IN A SITUATION LESS DIFFICULT
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THAN THE ONE AT TYRE." (UNIFIL COMMANDER GENERAL ERSKINE HAS RECOMMENDED THAT THE FRENCH WITHDRAW TO HIGH GROUND NEAR THE CITY.)

6. PALESTINIAN-CHRISTIAN CLASHES.

PALESTINIANS IN CHATEAU BEAUFORT AND CHRISTIANS IN THE MARJ'UYUN AREA EXCHANGED ARTILLERY FIRE MAY 7. SENIOR LEBANESE CHRISTIAN MILITIA OFFICER TOLD DATT SITUATION IN SOUTH WAS SERIOUS, AND THAT LEBANESE FRONT OFFICERS HAD MET WITH CAMILLE CHAMOUN EVENING OF MAY 7 TO DISCUSS IT. ELSEWHERE THE SITUATION WAS GENERALLY CALM.

7. PHALANGE CLAIMS CUBANS IN LEBANON.

WE CONTINUE TO HAVE NO REPEAT NO INFORMATION INDICATING THE PRESENCE OF CUBAN SOLDIERS IN LEBANON. (PHALANGIST VOICE OF LEBANON REPORTED MAY 3 THAT 400 CUBAN SOLDIERS AND MILITARY EXPERTS HAD ARRIVED IN LEBANON TO ASSIST GEORGE HABASH'S POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE.)

8. STILL NO CABINET.

ACTING PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS HAS STILL NOT FORMED A CABINET. ON MAY 5 HE SAID THAT: "WE WILL ADOPT SOME SOLUTION AT THE PRESENT TIME AND WILL NOT LEAVE THE COUNTRY IN THIS VICIOUS CIRCLE MUCH LONGER REGARDLESS OF THE OBSTRUCTIONS AND DIFFICULTIES WHICH FACE US IN OUR EFFORTS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT."
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMISTICE, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT02585
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780197-0481
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780584/aaaactuy.tel
Line Count: 165
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fceeb4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BEIRUT 2559
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2766677
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE SITUATION: MAY 8, 1300 HOURS LOCAL
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fceeb4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014